

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

ACCOMMODATION WORKING GROUP

TUESDAY 27 APRIL 2021

Present:

Councillors: W Taylor (Chair), D Carr, A Cartie, K Nisbet, J R Potts, M Richardson

Officers: J Hughes, Town Clerk, M Wilkinson, Deputy Town Clerk, M Hawthorne, Committee Clerk

Thom Bradley, CVBA and Tom Johnston, Glendale Trust were welcomed to the first part of the meeting.

Glendale Trust

Tom explained that the trust was set up to support the community. A building was gifted and the trust raised the funds to convert the building into a community hub. Money was secured from the regeneration development money and as it was a trust they could tap into charitable funds and the lottery fund. The trust has over the years purchased a number of commercial properties on the High Street in Wooler as well as 20 affordable housing properties and a youth hostel. The aim of the trust is to provide more affordable housing as well as a wide range of public services, by working with the public, private and voluntary sector. There is a board of trustees. To begin with there were representatives from NCC, Berwick Borough Council and parish councils however that has changed in recent years with people keen to help manage the trust.

There are five staff in total, 3 full time and 2 part time and approximately 10-12 offices in the centre. Tom talked about how he raised the money to purchase the properties.

The Chair thanked Tom for providing so much information and Tom invited members to contact him should they wish to ask any further questions.

Thom Bradley said he is confident he could set up a trust as there are organisations who will come on board and he would welcome the idea of a community hub with BTC as a partner. This depends on being able to identify the right space and the right partners and the next step would be to apply for funds.

Actions from previous meeting

The Town Clerk confirmed that he has spoken to Steven Reay and asked if BTC could negotiate a more flexible lease when the current 10 year one runs out in 2023 for a shorter term. Steven agreed to a year's lease with a year's notice to leave. This gives the Council a lot of flexibility going forward.

The Town Clerk also spoke to Anne Lawson again to try and clarify the situation with regard to securing office accommodation for the Council as part of the Energising Blyth plan. She confirmed that there are no plans for office accommodation but would investigate any opportunities that may allow an alignment with existing projects.

Information from other Town Councils has been made available to members to look at in respect of their office accommodation arrangements. The Deputy Town Clerk has been in touch with NCC and Advance and no-one has been able to highlight any accommodation that would be suitable. He also explored the possibility of taking a unit in the Keel Row Centre, however, service charges would be approximately £120k per annum and no support would be available to help with refurbishment.

Return to work

The DTC has drawn up a two week rota which will be put in place when staff return to work. In the short term, when staff do return, they will be making use of the council chamber to ensure social distancing. Safety measures are already in place with notices displayed within the office, hand sanitisers etc.

Joseph Hughes
Town Clerk

4 May 2021